

The **Rest** of Your **Life!**

Everything You Need to Know
About the **Sabbath**

It's All About Love

Nothing is more important than love.

After all, the two great commandments are all about loving God with all our hearts and loving our neighbor as ourselves (1 John 4:8).

But as Benjamin Franklin said, "Time is the stuff of which life is made." Love depends on time. Whether that means a date with your significant other, a road trip with the family, or gathering with a church community each week to worship God, all love relationships are nurtured and flourish in the context of quality time.

And to be sure, quality time is not what happens in a typical family on a weekday morning, when everybody is gulping down food, primping hair, and ransacking closets for elusive clothing as they get ready to rush off to work, school, and appointments.

No—quality time means we take a deep breath, pause, rest, and listen to the ones we love. We mesh together and absorb one another into our lives. Our love relationships do not grow *racing* by one another, or even racing side by side, but in *resting* together. They also flourish best when we have a healthy love relationship with God. And that love is exactly why the subject of this magazine is so important in this hyper-accelerated age.

In the pages that follow, we'll explore the history, mystery, and relevance of a day of rest that the Bible calls the Sabbath, "a bridge that connects heaven and earth, God and people."¹ It's an extraordinary gift that so many have forgotten, but as you'll see clearly, the main reason God wants us to "remember the Sabbath" has everything to do with love.

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We're so busy with life that when it's over, we scarcely know what happened!

According to the American Psychological Association, "Chronic stress—stress that interferes with your ability to function normally over an extended period—is a growing public health crisis."

These high stress levels impact the daily lives of men, women, and even children, disrupting every part of life from sleep and work to physical and mental health and relationships. Unsurprisingly, money, work, and the economy top the list of the worst offenders that cause stress. More than 40 percent of adults suffer adverse health effects from stress, which has been linked to the leading causes of death in the United States, including heart disease, cancer, lung ailments, accidents, cirrhosis, and suicide.

Strangely, one of the best solutions for this crisis is to put down the smartphone and to step away from the computer. It's true! While these technologies should be making our lives and work easier, today they are being blamed on making us even busier—not just at work, but in our home lives too. Everywhere we turn, people are glued to their smartphones or Facebook, obsessively checking in with the office even during their time off, and always trying to keep up with "friends" they barely know on social media, while their real family and friends are sitting just across the table. Sometimes we're even texting our spouses from the next room.

It seems nearly everyone is rushing around trying to do more. Worse, instead of doing the same work in less time, we're being driven to do even more work in the same amount of time—overextending ourselves, losing sleep, risking our health, and sabotaging our relationships.

Our lack of consistent, uninterrupted rest and peaceful meditation is actually robbing us of our ability to enjoy the fruits of our labor. We need to do whatever it takes to ensure our hearts aren't perpetually overcharged with the cares of this life!

Perhaps it's time to hit the "pause" button. (Why not inhale deeply and exhale slowly right now?)

Amazingly, imprinted on the very fabric of time itself is a 24-hour period that was forever meant to be a time of rest for every human being on the planet, a day that nearly the entire world has forgotten. If we told you there was a special day every week during which you're *supposed* to forget about the cares of this world, to spend time with friends and family and God, and to stop working and enjoy nature all around you—would you believe it?

Well, it's true. This day is called the Sabbath, created by God just for you to refresh and invigorate your life every week. If you think that's something you can get behind, this magazine will help you discover everything you need to know about "The Rest of Your Life!"



PART 1

What Is the Sabbath?

Some call it an “oasis in time.”

Imagine having a day every week when you can say goodbye to your regular job and even household chores without feeling the guilt—a day to spend with your family and friends, or out in nature, or even doing something nice for someone else.

Sound like a luxury? It's not. In fact, the Bible says God actually designed this weekly holiday and built it into our very nature at the Creation:

“On the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made” (Genesis 2:2, 3).

Because God ceased from creating on the seventh day, He also designated—or “blessed”—it as a holy day to be remembered for all time.

The Hebrew word “sabbath” literally means “to cease.” Just as God ceased from His creation work, we are to rest from our day-to-day occupations and refocus on what's really important. It's a day to push the reset button in your physical and spiritual life.

Webster's Dictionary defines rest as “freedom from activity or labor.”



The Sabbath powerfully reveals God's deep love for our well-being. Of course, we know that God doesn't need rest: “He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep” (Psalm 121:4). God is never stressed or tired: “The everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary” (Isaiah 40:28). He wasn't

fatigued from creating our solar system, the earth, and all the creatures on our planet.

Yet, as an example to His creation, He ceased from His labor on the seventh day. It was a gift tailor-made for you! Jesus even said, “The Sabbath was made for man” (Mark 2:27). After six days of glorious creation, God chose to make one more day—the Sabbath. He didn't have to, but He wanted to. It was a time in which His creation could rejoice in what was created and experience physical and spiritual rest in the Creator's love.

The Sabbath Comes from God

God knew that in a world full of overworked minds and bodies damaged by sin, our tendency as humans would be to further our own selfish interests at just about any cost. He knew we would need a regular opportunity for spiritual growth and to refocus on things of eternal importance. Thus, the Sabbath is a divinely approved



opportunity—indeed, it's a divine decree—to break away from the pressures of everyday living.

It is such a vital part of human existence that God doesn't want any earthly power to get in the way of the Sabbath. So He specifically *commanded* His people to ...

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:8–11).

God's love really shines through in this commandment, doesn't it? Not only does He want you to rest from your labors, He wants everyone else to have the same opportunity to rest every single week. If you are

an employee, He wants you to rest. If you are an employer, not only does He want you to rest from managing your business, He wants to ensure that all your workers rest as well.

He even wants the beasts of burden in your care to get a rest too!

A Rest on the Seventh Day

Not only did God call for a special day of rest, He also specifically designated the exact day everyone was to experience this rest. It's another incredible sign of His love, and it actually makes a lot of sense!

Calling out one day to rest means friends, family, and other loved ones have the same time to enjoy each other's company and worship God together in fellowship. In today's hectic world, family members who work different jobs and different shifts often get very different days to rest—some have Wednesday off, some Saturday, and others Sunday. We end up missing out on each other's lives because our time off never overlaps. By naming a specific day, God ensures that we all get to be together at least one day a week.

It also ensures that likeminded people from all parts of the world come together as one, worshipping and praising God for His creation and His endless care. It's an incredibly special moment in time that inspires us and revives us!

So what day did God actually designate as the Sabbath? The word "sabbath" means rest, and to rest implies that you have already labored. It's logical, then, for God to have designated the last day of the week as the day of rest. And that's exactly what the Bible says He did. "The *seventh day* is the Sabbath" (Exodus 20:10, emphasis added). For every culture on Earth, the seventh day is what we commonly call Saturday.

Specifically, in the Jewish culture, a day was measured from sunset to sunset. The dark part of the day actually came first, and the light part last. That means the Bible Sabbath *begins* on Friday night at sunset and *ends* Saturday night at sunset. "From evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath" (Leviticus 23:32; see also Mark 1:32).

See?
Saturday is
the seventh
day of the
week.

Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

"Six days you shall work."

What about Sunday?

You might be wondering why most Christians worship on Sunday instead of on Saturday. It's an important question, and one we'll tackle a little later.



Is Saturday Still ... Saturday?

Can we know for certain that the Saturday we know today is the same Saturday Moses and Jesus knew? Yes! First, the Jewish people have been observing the seventh day from the time of their forefather, Abraham, and they still keep it today.

Exodus chapter 16 recounts a series of weekly Sabbath miracles repeated over a period of 40 years while the Jews roamed the wilderness. For instance, God provided manna for the children of Israel to collect six days a week, but the Lord commanded them to gather twice as much on Friday because no manna would fall from heaven on the Sabbath. (Keep in mind, this was before He gave them the Ten Commandments.)

God reiterated the Sabbath at Sinai (Exodus 20:8–11) when He gave them the law; and the Jews were still observing the seventh day when Jesus was born. A whole nation has been meticulously counting off this time, week after week, for thousands of years. Sure, a lone Jewish person stuck in a dungeon might lose track of the Sabbath, but it's simply implausible that the entire nation of

Did You Know?

The Sabbath in Human Language

The concept of resting from work on the seventh day of the week (Saturday) is common to most of the ancient and modern languages of the world. Languages reflect the customs of the cultures that speak them, and many ancient cultures rested on the seventh day. As languages developed, the name for the seventh day of the week remained "rest day."

In the mid-19th century, Dr. William Meade Jones created a "Chart of the Week," listing the name for the seventh day in 160 languages, including some of the most ancient of them. Babylonian, in use hundreds of years before Abraham or the giving of the Ten Commandments at Sinai, calls the seventh day of the week sa-ba-tu, meaning "rest day."

Even today, more than 100 languages worldwide, many of them unrelated to ancient Hebrew, use the word "Sabbath" for Saturday—and none of them designates any other day as a day of rest. Though the world's language groups have evolved so as to be unintelligible from one another, the word for the seventh day of the week has remained recognizable.

This is striking evidence independent of the Scriptures that confirms the biblical teaching that God's seventh-day Sabbath predates Judaism. The concept of a Saturday holy day of rest was understood, accepted, and practiced by most cultures from Babylon through modern times.



Has the Weekly Calendar Ever **Changed?**

In 1582, Pope Gregory XIII did make a small calendar change, but it did not interfere with the weekly cycle. (Our present Gregorian calendar was named after him when he authorized this change.) Before 1582, the Julian calendar had been in effect, instituted by Julius Caesar in about 46 BC. But the Julian calendar had calculated the length of the year as 365-1/4 days, and the solar year is actually 11 minutes shorter than that. Well, these 11 minutes accumulated every year, and by 1582, the numbering of the calendar was a full 10 days out of harmony with the solar system. Pope Gregory simply dropped these ten days out of the calendar. It was Thursday, October 4, 1582, and the next day, Friday, should have been October 5. But Gregory made it October 15 instead, dropping exactly 10 days to bring the calendar back into harmony with the heavenly bodies.

The days of the week were not changed. Friday still followed Thursday, and Saturday still followed Friday. The same seventh day remained Saturday, as has always been the case. Indeed, the world's premier timekeeping agencies attest to this fact:



"There has been no change in our calendar in past centuries that has affected in any way the cycle of the week."

—James Robertson, Director American Ephemeris, Navy Department, U.S. Naval Observatory, Washington, D.C.

"It can be said with assurance that not a day has been lost since Creation, and all the calendar changes

notwithstanding, there has been no break in the weekly cycle."

—Dr. Frank Jeffries, Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society and Research Director of the Royal Observatory, Greenwich, England.

Jews would simultaneously forget or miscalculate their revered holy day.

Second, more than 160 languages—both ancient and modern—around the earth identify Saturday to be "a rest day." For example, the Spanish word for Saturday is "Sábado," meaning Sabbath. In Russian it is "Subbota."

It shows that when languages originated, Saturday was universally recognized as the rest day and was incorporated into the very name of the day. (See page 11 for additional information.)

Third, God has promised to preserve the Sabbath

throughout eternity. Isaiah 66:22, 23, says, "'As the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me,' says the LORD, 'So shall your descendants and your name remain. And it shall come to pass that from one New Moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me.'" Would God lose track of the Sabbath if it's going to be kept throughout eternity?

According to the New Testament, Jesus died on a Friday and rose on a Sunday, the first day of the week. The Bible says "a man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down ... and laid it in a tomb. ... That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near" (Luke 23:52-54). Friday was called "the preparation day" because it was the time to get ready for the Sabbath.

The next few verses say, "The women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment" (vv. 55, 56). This is a good time to note that Jesus' followers would not even finish their labor of love, embalming their Master's body for burial, until the Sabbath was passed. It means they must have believed Jesus held the Sabbath commandment in the highest regard.

Note, too, that these women rested over the Sabbath "according to the commandment"—meaning the fourth commandment—which says, "The seventh day is the Sabbath," so we can know they were resting on Saturday. The very next

Sabbath (English)
Sábado (Spanish)
Subbota (Russian)
Sabbato (Italian)
Sabbaton (Greek)



verses say, “Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb” (Luke 24:1, 2).

According to the Bible, Jesus died Friday, the preparation day, which many Christians now refer to as “Good Friday.” He then “rested” in the tomb on the seventh day, Sabbath, a Saturday. Then on Sunday, the first day of the week, Jesus rose from the grave.

It’s actually amazing when you consider that Jesus kept the Sabbath even in His death. He completed His work of salvation on Friday afternoon—declaring, “It is finished!”—then He died. He rested in the tomb throughout the Sabbath and then rose Sunday morning. Why? To continue His work, now as our high priest (Hebrews 8:1–3).

An Amazing Fact



month



year



day

Seven-day Cycle

The year is measured by the sun; the month is measured by the moon; and the day is measured by the earth’s rotation. But there is little if any scientific or astronomical reason for measuring time in cycles of seven days. You’ll find it only in the Bible.

Another Reason for the Sabbath

More than just acknowledging God as the Creator and the blessings of a rest from our work, the Bible explains there is yet another amazing reason to enjoy the Sabbath. Yes, God gave the Sabbath as a sign that He created the world in six literal 24-hour days, but it is also a sign of God’s mighty power to redeem and sanctify you.

Let’s take a look at Deuteronomy 5:12–15:

“Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. *And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day*” (emphasis added).

As you can see, the first part of this passage is almost identical to the fourth commandment given in Exodus. But notice especially the part in italics; it’s an *additional* reason the Jews were given to keep the Sabbath: because God

saved them from Egyptian bondage.

Likewise, the Sabbath is a memorial to our salvation in Jesus Christ, who has saved us from the bondage of sin—just as God once led the Jews out of Egypt. As God made His people holy, Jesus likewise sanctifies His followers; we have been grafted into the family of Abraham and are partakers of Christ's pure righteousness. Jesus said, "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to *heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind*, to set at liberty those who are oppressed" (Luke 4:18, emphasis added). Isn't that great news?

If Jesus, as the Creator, can make giant planets, lush vegetation, and make and heal human beings simply by His word, then He is also able to totally recreate you. If you live a life spotted by darkness and sin, Jesus offers you a brand-new, transformed life. Instead of the heartache you bring to others when you sin, the Lord empowers you to live in obedience, not because obedience earns you a place in heaven, but because obedience to His Word brings you peace and joy and *rest!*

The Sabbath is a weekly reminder that we may come to Him and be restored. In Matthew 11:28–30, Jesus says, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Jesus is the ultimate rest, so every Sabbath is a special opportunity to remember that He has freed you from the snares of the devil—not only washing away the guilt of your sin, but also cleansing away the sins still in your life.

What a beautiful promise! Of course, it takes the same power to lead sinful hearts to recreation as to call something into existence. The Bible says, "Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness"



(Ephesians 4:24). Since this new life in Christ is a powerful identifying mark of a believer who has been justified by faith in Christ, the Bible writers often remind us that this re-creative power distinguishes the true God from every manmade counterfeit.

If God can justify you, set you right with Him, then He is perfectly able to sanctify you in every part of your life too. You are born-again. And He is willing too, if you just put all your faith in His power to lead your life.

Pointing beyond the mere physical creation, God says, "I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I am the LORD who *sanctifies* them" (Ezekiel 20:12, emphasis added). The sanctified Sabbath was the mark of His sanctified people. It serves as a weekly reminder that God can set people apart for a holy use through regeneration.

The Bible says, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2). Every Sabbath is a moment in time to step away from the distractions of the world that can make us forget about God's grace and His power to recreate us into new creatures! Does it get any better than that?



Days of the Week

Names and Numbers

In the days of the Old Testament, the Jews did not name their days of the week, but instead assigned them numbers, the first through the seventh, leading up to the Sabbath. Other than the Sabbath, one exception was Friday, the sixth day, which was sometimes called "the preparation day."

But what about our English-language names for the days of the week? They are derived from the names of Roman, Germanic, and Norse gods.

1

SUNDAY

is the "day of the sun," from the Romans. Many pagan cultures worshiped the sun as a god.



2

MONDAY

is the "day of the moon," from the Anglo-Saxons.



3

TUESDAY

is named after the German god of war, Tiu.



4

WEDNESDAY

is "Woden's day." Woden is another name for Odin, a Norse god of the hunt.



5

THURSDAY

is "Thor's day," after the Norse god of thunder and lightning.



6

FRIDAY

is "Freya's day," the Norse goddess of love, marriage, and fertility.



7

SATURDAY

is "Saturn's day," a Roman God of wealth.






PART 2

The History of the Sabbath

In order to have context and clearly understand a subject, it helps to go back to the beginning and explore the foundations of that subject. So we're going to go all the way back to consider the origins of the Sabbath day.

The Bible says that "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). This act of creation took place over six days.



Day 1: God created light and divided it from the darkness. He called the light "Day," and the dark He called "Night" (Genesis 1:3–5).

Day 2: God next created a "firmament" to divide the "waters" above from those below. God called this "Heaven," and it refers to our atmosphere (Genesis 1:6–8).

Day 3: God then made "dry land." He called this "Earth," and the waters He called "Seas." God also created vegetation—the grass, trees, and plants (Genesis 1:9–13).

Day 4: God created the sun, moon, and stars. They were for "signs and seasons, and for days and years ... to give light on the earth" (Genesis 1:14–19).

Day 5: God began to populate the world, creating both water-dwelling and flying creatures, including fish, whales, and birds (Genesis 1:20–23).

Day 6: God then created the land-dwelling animals, the "cattle and creeping thing and beast" (Genesis 1:24, 25).

And, at last, God made Adam and Eve, human beings, man and woman. "Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth'" (Genesis 1:26–31).

From the smallest amoeba to our colossal sun, God created it all in the time of just six, literal 24-hour days. It was a truly astonishing, wonderful work—something we get to experience in all its glory from the moment we wake up to the time we go to bed.

The Creation of the Sabbath

But God wasn't finished just yet with setting up our world. He had one more thing He wanted to do. This is how the Bible puts it:

"Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made" (Genesis 2:1–3).

God made the Sabbath at the time of creation, when He made our world. He rested on the

Sabbath and blessed and sanctified it, setting it apart for a holy use.

Webster's Dictionary defines sanctify as "set apart for a sacred purpose or religious use."



Again, God didn't rest because He needed to recover. In this case, "rest" means simply to cease from working—thus, God ceased creating. However, by blessing and sanctifying the seventh day, God was calling very special attention to the Sabbath.



Did You Know?

The Ark and the Sabbath

God instructed Moses to build a temple, all its furniture, and an "ark"—a special container—according to "the pattern" he was shown (Exodus 25:9, 40). This ark was called the "ark of the covenant" (Deuteronomy 10:8; Hebrews 9:4), and the "ark of the Testimony" (Exodus 25:22), because in it Moses placed the tablets of stone on which God wrote His Law, including the Sabbath (Exodus 25:16, 31:18). The Ten Commandments were placed inside the ark, while the "law of Moses" was placed at its side, showing that God's Ten Commandments, including the Sabbath, are eternal.

The Sabbath in Israel

While we know little about the practice of the Sabbath prior to Exodus, the sanctity of the seventh day is certainly acknowledged in the second chapter of Genesis, by the author Moses, providing powerful evidence that God intended the Sabbath to be the regular practice of His people long before the Jewish nation formed through Abraham.

Although the Sabbath is not specifically mentioned, Genesis 26:5 tells us that Abraham obeyed God's commandments, statutes, and laws. It's well understood by scholars that the Sabbath of creation would be a part of this. Even Jesus said the Sabbath was made for all mankind, not merely Hebrews (Mark 2:27).

For God's people, the Sabbath was a serious, deeply held commitment to the Lord. Even prior to the Ten Commandments being spoken or written by the hand of God, the Jews signified their knowledge of the Sabbath by not collecting manna on the seventh day (Exodus 16:22–30). Again, this was in a time *before* they arrived at Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments.

Sign of the True God

For the Jews, the Sabbath was a sign of the true God, by which we are to know Him from false gods (Ezekiel 20:20).

The Ten Commandments

The Sabbath is found in the fourth commandment. While this law was officially codified in Hebrew culture after the Exodus, evidence in Scripture suggests the Jewish people were



already familiar with God's law prior to their freedom from Egypt. Perhaps that's why this commandment, the only one out of the entire list, begins with "remember."

During their captivity and hard labor in Egypt, surrounded by a horde of ancient pagan gods, the Israelites had apparently become negligent in observing the Sabbath. This is why Moses and Aaron appeared before the king of Egypt only after they had met with the leaders



An Amazing Fact

God's Voice

The seventh-day Sabbath was commanded by the voice of God, as were all the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 4:12,13).



of Israel. They told these leaders that God was about to work mightily in their behalf, but that they must first re-consecrate themselves to the Lord, which, naturally, would have included keeping His Sabbath.

This was actually one of the specific objections of the Pharaoh, who complained, "Look, the people of the land are many now, and you make them rest [literally: "keep Sabbath"] from their labor" (Exodus 5:5).

Later, in Exodus 31:12–17, the Sabbath is said to be a perpetual sign between God and His people. This passage also details the consequences a person would experience for breaking the Sabbath.

"Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you. You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed."

While it might seem unusual to be punished by death for violating a day of worship, remember that the Jewish people had just been miraculously freed from bondage

that was designed to work them to the bone. And every day since in the wilderness, they witnessed God's presence in the fiery column that guided them through the desert lands.

So to openly defy the Sabbath, which specifically expresses God's fundamental, natural right to rule over the earth because He created it, was an extremely brazen act that mocked His love and the liberation of His people.

Never forget, however, that the Sabbath commandment reveals God's heart and pity even for the lowest laborer—even the slave. Thus, breaking the Sabbath was an open rebellion that diminished God's character and rulership in the eyes of everyone who witnessed this tragic act of disobedience.

A Sabbath for All

Did you know that throughout the history of Israel, God invited all people to remember His holy day? The prophet Isaiah writes about the Sabbath often in his book, decrying how God's people had disregarded and

corrupted the seventh day (Isaiah 1:13). He also writes, "Blessed is the man ... who keeps from defiling the Sabbath" (Isaiah 56:2). Indeed, keeping the Sabbath in God's eyes is so important that the lowly slaves who faithfully observed the Sabbath, while their masters did not, are considered blessed even above those who call themselves God's people!

"To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, and choose what pleases Me, and hold fast My covenant, even to them I will give in My house and within My walls a place and a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off" (Isaiah 56:4, 5).

In this next passage, Isaiah 56:6, 7, we find God inviting even non-Jews to embrace the blessings of the Sabbath. Notice particularly how Scripture identifies the Sabbath with the terms "love" and "joy":

"Also the sons of the foreigner who join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants—everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and holds fast My covenant—even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer."



Sabbath Restrictions

The Sabbath commandment primarily forbids regular work labor, urging people to rest by spending time with loved ones and fellow believers in the worship of God. The first specified act restricted in Scripture is lighting fires on Sabbath (Exodus 35:2, 3). Jews were allowed to have fires, of course, but the labor-intensive work of gathering wood and kindling the fire was to be completed before sundown. In Nehemiah 10:31, the act of buying or selling on the Sabbath is also specifically forbidden. And in Jeremiah 17:21, 22, the act of carrying a burden out of a house or the city gates was deemed inappropriate on the Sabbath.

Over the centuries, Jewish leaders added to these specific acts in an attempt to heavily regulate Sabbath observance. Some of these violations included:

Sowing	Plowing	Reaping	Binding	Threshing
Winnowing	Grinding	Sifting	Kneading	Baking
Shearing wool	Washing wool	Beating wool	Dyeing wool	Spinning
Weaving	Making two loops	Weaving two threads	Separating two threads	Tying
Untying	Sewing stitches	Tearing	Trapping	Slaughtering
Flaying	Tanning	Cutting hide to shape	Writing two or more letters	Erasing two or more letters
Building	Demolishing	Extinguishing a fire	Kindling a fire	Transporting an object

An Amazing Fact

Blessings for the Gentile



God has pronounced a special blessing on all the Gentiles who will keep the Sabbath. The prophecy in Isaiah 56:6, 7, refers to the Christian era.

The entire history of Israel is replete with God's special attention regarding the Sabbath, promising abundant blessings on those who in loving obedience kept it—and bad consequences when His people were disobedient:

"If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the LORD honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father" (Isaiah 58:13, 14).

For God's people, this meant that for 24 hours every week, they were to refrain from seeking their own advancement and personal pleasure and to avoid talking about or participating in matters of business. On the Sabbath, they were to give all their attention to spiritual things, to let go of the world around them and find rest in the love and care of God.

Yet the Lord's people made a habit of dishonoring the Sabbath. They often complained that the Sabbath, something designed to ease their stress, was actually a burden to their livelihoods. "When will the New Moon be past, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may trade wheat?" (Amos 8:5). The prophet Amos added

An Amazing Fact

Modern Israel

Saturday is still an official day of rest in modern-day Israel, a day on which all government offices and most secular businesses are closed.



Psalm 92

A SONG FOR THE SABBATH DAY

*It is good to give thanks to the LORD,
And to sing praises to Your name,
O Most High;
To declare Your lovingkindness
in the morning,
And Your faithfulness every night . . .
For You, LORD, have made me glad
through Your work;
I will triumph in the works of Your hands.
O LORD, how great are Your works!
Your thoughts are very deep. . .
When the wicked spring up like grass,
And when all the workers of
iniquity flourish,
It is that they may be destroyed forever.
But You, LORD, are on high forevermore. . .
I have been anointed with fresh oil.
My eye also has seen my desire on
my enemies;
My ears hear my desire on the wicked
Who rise up against me.
The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree,
He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.
Those who are planted in the
house of the LORD
Shall flourish in the courts of our God.
They shall still bear fruit in old age;
They shall be fresh and flourishing,
To declare that the LORD is upright;
He is my rock, and there is no
unrighteousness in Him.*

that this kind of attitude was like stealing through dishonest business practices, except they were stealing time from God!

This kind of selfish disobedience to God's Sabbath law was said to be the reason that Israel fell under the cruel hands of enemy nations. "If you will not heed Me to hallow the Sabbath day, such as not carrying a burden when entering the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched" (Jeremiah 17:27).

Without the observance of the Sabbath, it was easier for God's people to forget the rest of His law, tearing them apart as a people under God. They fell into detestable practices seen only in the worst of heathen lands around them. Eventually, because of their disobedience, they would go into captivity under the Assyrians and Babylonians.

The Bible makes this connection with the Sabbath plain. It was during Jewish captivity that the prophet Ezekiel recorded these words from God:

"I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them. Yet ... they did not walk in My statutes; ... they greatly defiled My Sabbaths" (Ezekiel 20:12, 13).

Do you remember that God made the Sabbath "holy" by setting it apart at the creation? He said, again in Ezekiel, Israel "violated My law and *profaned My holy things*; they have not distinguished between the holy and unholy, nor have they made known the difference between the unclean and the clean; and they have *hidden their eyes from My Sabbaths*" (Ezekiel 22:26, emphasis added).

Webster's Dictionary defines profane as "treating something sacred with abuse, irreverence, or contempt."



Again, as a direct result of this stubborn disobedience, God said,

"I raised My hand in an oath to those in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the Gentiles and disperse them throughout the countries, because they had not executed My judgments, but had despised My statutes, profaned My Sabbaths" (Ezekiel 20:23, 24).

This is exactly what happened! The Jewish nation was scattered and dispersed among the Gentiles. This is the seriousness with which God considers His Sabbath day. It is literally the seal of His authority, telling humanity how we got here and why God has authority over our lives. When His chosen people violated the Sabbath, it profaned a holy day before the Gentiles, which is not the example God wanted His people to set among the surrounding nations.

But God loves His people, and in His mercy, Israel's time of divine discipline was eventually ended. The

Jews were freed from the bondage of Babylon and returned to Jerusalem. Of course, after 70 years of suffering, these returning people had not forgotten why they had been taken into captivity in the first place.

They remembered that their breaking of the Sabbath was directly tied to their ruin.

Understandably, they didn't want to fall back into the same pattern of disobedience regarding the Sabbath.

However, their chief priests and leaders actually soon began to overcompensate, heavily regulating Sabbath observance. Now the pendulum of keeping the law swung away from total disobedience and toward something all together different, something that oppressed God's people.

But this time, God would send a new kind of prophet to save His people and set the Sabbath day right once again ...





The Sabbath in the Gospels

"The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:28).

In the time of Jesus, the Sabbath was still a big part of Jewish life and custom. Indeed, did you know that in the Gospel accounts—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—the word "Sabbath" appears nearly 60 times? Jesus' own life and ministry revolved around the Sabbath in extraordinary ways.

The Bible makes it clear that observing the Sabbath was part of Jesus' regular routine. "So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read" (Luke 4:16). As a follower of God, Jesus made certain to honor the fourth commandment. It would always be a deeply meaningful day to Him throughout His ministry.

Still, religious leaders, particularly the Pharisees, found ways to harass Jesus about the keeping of the Sabbath. It's evident that in Jesus' mind, what the Sabbath day had become in the lives of the Jews was not what God had wanted for them. While Jesus never taught that the Sabbath commandment was or would ever be abolished, He did want to restore the day to God's original plan, longing to teach the people its true meaning.

A Pharisee was a member of a powerful and popular ancient Jewish sect that emphasized strict observance of the law of Moses.

At the end of the previous chapter, we saw that religious leaders, concerned about how disobedience to the Sabbath had brought ruin on their nation, began to draw up specific codes for honoring the Sabbath—such as determining how far a person could walk on the seventh day.

By Jesus' time, these codes had begun to pile up, turning the Sabbath into an oppressive day for God's people and making it nearly impossible for a faithful Jew to do even common sense activities on the Sabbath. For example, a woman could wear a hair pin on the Sabbath, but if she carried it in her hands, it was considered a burden. And if a person even touched a work implement, like a hammer or a shovel, he or she would be defiled. The Pharisees had thousands of such manmade rules about the Sabbath and other religious duties.

Additionally, spitting on the dusty ground was considered akin to making mortar on the Sabbath.

And it only gets worse!

If a Jew's house caught on fire during Sabbath hours, these absurd manmade regulations, with no basis in Scripture, forbade them from saving their belongings by carrying them out by hand, as that was considered labor. It was in this way that Jewish leaders used the law of God, including the Sabbath, as a way to exercise strict control over the very people God entrusted them to shepherd in His grace.

Just as God used the prophets of old to warn His people about disobedience regarding His Sabbath in the Old Testament, Christ likewise came to show what it really meant to be obedient regarding the Sabbath. He taught that the Sabbath was a crucial part of our experience with God and that manmade rules and regulations often cluttered up this truth.

Religious leaders had distorted the Sabbath; Jesus desired to set it right.

Many have claimed that because Jesus isn't recorded specifically reinforcing the Sabbath in the New Testament, it shows that He must have not considered it important.

But since He did observe the Sabbath, and because we see no

Jewish outcry with one of their own trying to do away with the Sabbath commandment, this "argument from silence" works best the other way around. Indeed, Jesus often mentions a commandment to add more meaning to it. Of course, Jesus does mention the Sabbath while defending it from legalists, and He honored the Sabbath by going to the synagogue (Luke 4:16).

The Gospels and the Sabbath

If Jesus had taught His disciples to do away with the Sabbath, it makes sense that the Gospel writers would have made it very clear in their writings. But there is nothing to indicate such a change, even in Matthew, a Gospel written specifically to the Jews, who would have had to reorient themselves to a life without a seventh-day Sabbath.



Jesus Declares His Mission on Sabbath

"So [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: 'The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.' Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.' So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth" (Luke 4:16–22).

Jesus here is reading Isaiah 61:1, 2, announcing that He is the Messiah. The synagogue leaders resented this claim and tried to destroy Him, but they couldn't stop His mission, and they couldn't keep Jesus from healing and teaching on the Sabbath. (See Luke 4:31–35.)





Jesus' Favorite Sabbath Pastime

The ministry of Jesus was one of extraordinary compassion. Perhaps even more than speaking about the Scriptures, He deeply enjoyed demonstrating the Father's love through healing people from their ailments, feeding them, and freeing them from their bondage to sin. And it was these kinds of good works that Jesus regularly performed on the Sabbath day.

On another Sabbath, Jesus entered a synagogue and healed a man who had a withered hand. The deformity wasn't life threatening, so according to the cold-hearted Pharisees, healing the hand was unnecessary. But this missed the point of the Sabbath, so Jesus desired to correct this fallacy in the hearts of men who believed religion was merely routine observation of the law, and not that the law was created as a loving, guiding principle.

"Jesus said to them, 'I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy?' And when He had looked around at them all, He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he did so, and his hand was restored as whole as the other" (Luke 6:9, 10).

Jesus Liberates the Sabbath

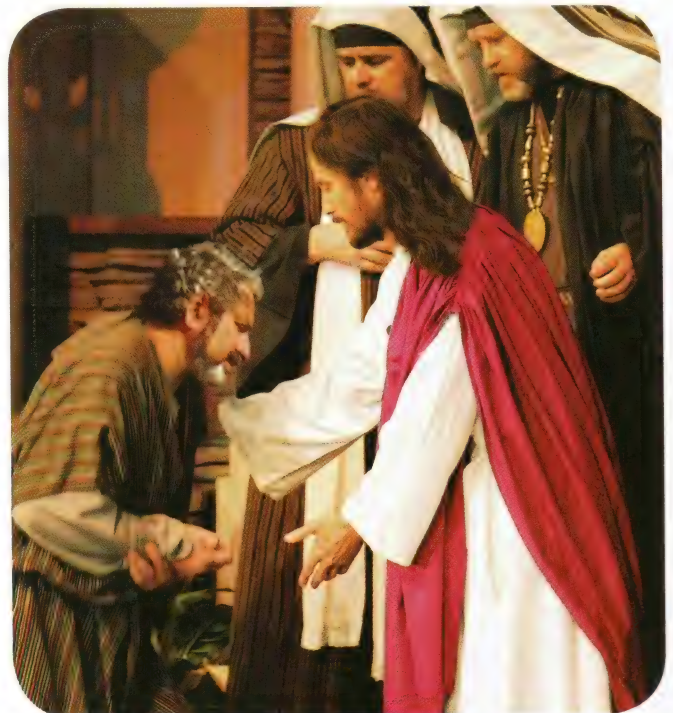
The very first mention of the Sabbath in the book of Matthew deals with the Pharisees questioning Jesus about His observance of the fourth commandment. It would be a common event during Jesus' three-year ministry.

Matthew 12:1-8 tells the story of the disciples in the grain fields on a Sabbath day, hungrily plucking the heads of grain to eat. This type of "labor" was condemned by the Pharisees as harvesting, saying, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath!"

Christ's response isn't that the Sabbath is no longer valid, but rather that the Pharisees have lost sight of the true meaning of the day, proclaiming, "The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." Here Jesus was declaring ownership of the Sabbath as its Creator, revealing that He had the authority to decide who was or wasn't really breaking the Sabbath. He is the same Creator who rested from His work on the Sabbath, so He knows what it really means to violate the Sabbath day.

But a closer look reveals that the disciples were not actually breaking the Sabbath. They weren't harvesting grain in any sense of the word; they were simply eating because they were hungry. It was the Pharisees' strict observance of the Sabbath day and their desire to entrap Jesus and defame Him in the public eye that was getting in the way of true love and mercy. In fact, Deuteronomy 23:25 explains the disciples were instead following the law of gleaning. They were merely eating kernels, after cleaning away the chaff, consuming them for much-needed nourishment that day. It was about as labor-intensive as separating a peanut from its shell.

Can you imagine a better gift on the Sabbath? Jesus was revealing His creative power and healed a man who was no doubt joyful beyond words to have two working hands. But notice the attitude of the Pharisees: "They were



filled with rage, and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus" (v. 11).

Notice, once again, that Jesus did not abolish the Sabbath but showed us instead how it should be kept.

Matthew 5:19

Jesus reveals just how dangerous it really is to break God's law, including the Sabbath: "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

This is one of the principal goals of Jesus: to restore the true meaning of God's moral laws in our hearts. He loved God's laws and defended them tenaciously, but mankind had turned these liberating laws of love into something hateful. An Old Testament prophecy about the Messiah foretold Jesus would do this very thing: "He will exalt the law and make it honorable" (Isaiah 42:21).

Let's look at one more incident when Jesus healed on the Sabbath. In Luke 13:10–17, we learn about a "woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up." Again, inside a synagogue, Jesus healed the woman of her back injury. Once again, an infuriated religious leader rebuked Jesus and the crowd:

"The ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, 'There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day.'"

Jesus was deeply saddened that while the Pharisees taught that an injured, hungry, or thirsting animal could be cared for on the Sabbath, a suffering fellow human being was to be cast aside. If the Sabbath was made for people, why did the Pharisees refuse to let it be a blessing to the people? Because it was a way to bend the people

to their will and keep them in religious subjugation. Jesus responded,

"Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound—think of it—for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath? And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him" (vv. 15–17).

In a similar Sabbath healing event, Jesus said, "Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?" (Luke 14:5). Here Jesus indicates it's not just physical illness that can be eased on the Sabbath but other kinds of burdens that require immediate attention.

The Good Works of Jesus on the Sabbath

The Sabbath commandment specifically forbids regular secular work on the Sabbath. But while it says there are things we shouldn't do, it doesn't list out things that are acceptable. However, by example, Jesus revealed good works that eased suffering are encouraged by God. For instance, He healed:

A Man with a Withered Hand

Mark 3:1–6

A Woman with a Back Injury

Luke 13:10–17

A Possessed Man

Luke 4:33–36

Peter's Sick Mother-in-Law

Luke 4:38–41

A Man with Dropsy

Luke 14:1–6

An Invalid

John 5:1–18

A Blind Man

John 9:1–34

Spiritual Healing

Before moving on, let's look at one more Sabbath healing that sent shock waves through the nation of Israel.

"In the synagogue there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon. And he cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!' But Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be quiet, and come out of him!' And when the demon had thrown him in their midst, it came out of him and did not hurt him. Then they were all amazed and spoke among themselves, saying, 'What a word this is! For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.'" (Luke 4:33–36).

Stories in the Bible dealing with demon possession are really about spiritual sickness. Jesus' parable about the man who swept his house from demonic influences only to let more demons in speaks to how the world entraps us with its many seductions. Jesus worked these liberating miracles on the Sabbath to help people recognize that He was their long-awaited Savior, their Redeemer. "He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim



liberty to the captives ... to set at liberty those who are oppressed" (Luke 4:18). The Sabbath was a time of freeing people from their bondage—whether physical or spiritual. This is the true spirit of the seventh day.

Amazingly, Jesus accused the priests themselves of breaking the Sabbath! "Have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?" (Matthew 12:5).

Jesus says that God permitted these services because this spiritual, albeit regular, work relieved spiritual suffering and bondage.

Jesus reasoned that love trumped the traditions of the religious leaders in His time. He taught that we should love our neighbors as ourselves (Leviticus 19:18), and He taught that the law hung on this central tenet of love. He also knew, however, that worship and the Sabbath were intimately connected.

It's clear that the Sabbath law was exceedingly important to Jesus. Every debate Jesus had with religious leaders regarding the Sabbath was never about *whether* or not the Sabbath should be kept, but *how* it should be kept. He upheld the Sabbath law by defending its true meaning—it was a day to be a blessing, a rest from normal work, and an opportunity to help others.

The Resurrection and the Sabbath

Jesus kept the Sabbath even in His death, which Luke indicates occurred on the day before the Sabbath: "Going to Pilate, [Joseph of Arimathea] asked for Jesus' body. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. It was preparation day, and the Sabbath was about to begin" (Luke 23:52–54). Luke also describes the actions of the women who followed Jesus. "The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment" (vv. 55, 56).

When the disciples' labor of embalming Jesus' body was not complete Friday afternoon, rather than doing something they knew might displease their Lord, they stopped and planned to return when the Sabbath was over. "On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb" (Luke 23:55, 56; 24:1). The women discovered that Jesus had risen on Sunday morning; Christians acknowledge this by celebrating Easter. The day on which the women rested between preparation day (Good Friday) when Jesus died, and the first day of the week (Easter Sunday) when Jesus rose again, had to be Saturday.



The Sabbath in the Early Christian Church

The disciples received their mission orders from Jesus himself—to share the good news with the entire world. The Lord had given them the role of establishing His church, and not long after, they began to be called “Christians” because they were followers of Christ. They believed the most effective form of reaching the world

with the gospel was to model the life of Christ.

Jesus once said that the most important commandment is to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength” (Mark 12:28–30). In striving to follow this commandment, putting God first in their lives, the

disciples and early church leaders obviously sought to honor the Sabbath in the same way Jesus honored it. As students of the Scriptures, the words of Isaiah 56:2–7 would have deep meaning to them:

“Blessed is the man ... who keeps from defiling the Sabbath. ... Also the sons of the foreigner, who join themselves to the LORD, ... everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and holds fast my covenant—even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer ... for My house shall be called an house of prayer for all nations.”

Thus, all the apostles kept God’s seventh-day Sabbath holy. Notice how the description of Jesus’ custom in Luke 4:16 is mirrored by Acts 17:2—“Paul, *as his custom was*, went in to them [the synagogues], and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures” (Acts 17:2, emphasis added). It was Paul’s custom, long after Christ had died, to observe the Sabbath day. (See also Acts 13:13, 14; Acts 18:4.) Paul followed Jesus’ example and did the same kind of preaching in the synagogues on Sabbath.

In one poignant moment in the early church, we find Paul meeting with a company of women on Sabbath

An Amazing Fact

Sabbath in the New Testament

The Sabbath is mentioned in the New Testament 58 times, and always with respect, bearing the same title it had in the Old Testament, “the Sabbath day.”

Mark



and praying with them. "On the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there" (Acts 16:13). The book of Acts makes it clear that Paul and the early church kept the Sabbath just as Jesus did.

We also find the apostles teaching Gentiles on the Sabbath. Indeed, to hear these messages of God, the new believers actually came to the synagogues. "When the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them *the next Sabbath*. ... On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God" (Acts 13:42, 44, emphasis added). Notice that Luke, the Gentile writer of the book of Acts, continues to call Saturday the Sabbath day, never hinting that the Sabbath Jesus observed no longer mattered.

Thus, the apostles in the early New Testament church not only obeyed God's Sabbath command, they also taught the converted Gentiles to worship on Sabbath. They never once questioned its validity.

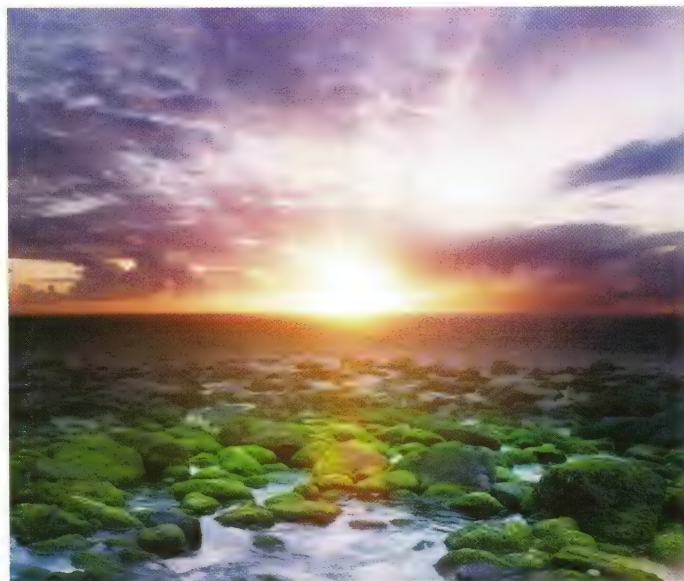
Worship Confusion

Many Christians are surprised to learn that the disciples continued keeping the Sabbath as their day of worship. They believe that some parts of the Bible seem to suggest that Jesus' followers actually switched their day of worship. Let's look closely at some of these passages.



Acts 20:7–12: "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight."

There is nothing to suggest this was a Sunday morning service. Again, according to the Bible, each day begins at sundown and ends at the next sundown (see Leviticus 23:32) and the dark part of the day comes first. So Sabbath actually begins Friday night at sundown and ends Saturday night at sundown. This meeting of Acts 20 was held on the dark part of Sunday, or on what we now call Saturday night. The New English Bible begins Acts 20:7 like this: "On the Saturday night in our assembly. ..." So this was a Saturday-night meeting, and it lasted until midnight. Paul was on a farewell tour and knew he would not see these people again before his death (verse 25). Paul was also "ready to depart on the morrow"—if it were the Sabbath for him, he wouldn't be traveling. The "breaking of bread" also has no particular significance here because they broke bread daily (Acts 2:46). This meeting is mentioned in the Scripture because of the miracle of raising





Gentiles Follow Sabbath

The Gentile converts called Saturday the Sabbath (Acts 13:42).

Sunday in the New Testament



Only eight texts in the New Testament mention the first day of the week, Sunday. None of them implies that it did or should become the Christian weekly day of worship.

Eutychus back to life. There is nothing in this passage that suggests God had changed the fourth commandment.



1 Corinthians 16:1, 2: "Concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come."

There is no reference here to an actual church meeting. The funds were to be laid aside privately at home. A famine was raging in Judea (Romans 15:26; Acts 11:26–30), and Paul was writing to ask the churches in Asia Minor to assist their famine-stricken brethren. These Christians all kept Sabbath holy, so Paul suggested that on Sunday morning, which was the time they paid bills and settled accounts, they put aside something for their needy brethren so it would be on hand when he came.



John 20:19: "Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, 'Peace be with you.'"

This "meeting" does not signify the disciples had chosen a new day of worship. Rather, at this event, the disciples did not believe that the resurrection had taken place (Mark 16:14). They had met there "for fear of the Jews" and had the doors bolted. It was not a religious meeting. When Jesus appeared in their midst, He rebuked them "because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen."

In his writings, the apostle Paul tackled the sticky issues of food that was offered to idols, circumcision, and other controversial topics. However, he never addressed the subject of the weekly Sabbath. Moreover, he's never accused of Sabbath-breaking. If there had been a change in the day of worship, it would have been a hotly debated topic in the early Christian church—but we hear nothing about it. Why? Because the day of worship did not change for the early Christian church.



Think to Change Times and Laws

*"Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven"
(Psalm 119:89).*

We've already seen together how the Creator set aside the seventh day of the week, Saturday, as a day of special communion with Him and rest from our regular labors (Exodus 20:10). We've also seen that Jesus set out to honor the Sabbath as God the Father intended and that the early church followed this example.

Moreover, in both the Old and New Testaments, we don't find any passage that suggests the day of the Sabbath was changed. So if the change did not take place in the Bible or through the influence of Jesus and the apostles, why do so many people who follow Christ today observe Sunday, the first day of the week, instead of the seventh day?

In order to understand this, let's look at what happened in the early church soon after the original apostles passed away. The apostle Paul, for instance, specifically predicted that apostasy, a falling away from the truth, would take place soon after his death. He even warned that this apostasy was already at work in his lifetime, and that it would come not from an outside influence, but from *within* the church (2 Thessalonians 2:7; Acts 20:28-30).

Interestingly, the prophet Daniel, writing hundreds of years earlier, predicted a religious power would rise up after the time of the Messiah, Jesus, and "shall intend to

change times and law," meaning the Sabbath and the Ten Commandments (Daniel 7:25).

Amazingly, we don't have to look very far into early church history to see just how this prophecy was fulfilled. A teaching known as Gnosticism soon rose up under the influence of religious philosophers who sought to reconcile Christianity with Paganism. At this same time, a strong anti-Jewish sentiment became widespread, and these same pagan-influenced Christians sought to distance themselves from Judaism.

By the time the great general Constantine became the emperor of Rome in the early fourth century, the Christian church, already rising in power and membership, found itself divided regarding the influences of the unconverted world in the practice of their unique faith.

Sunday: Constantine to Today

It has been said that Constantine was the first "Christian emperor," and the story of his conversion is well known among historians. He was marching his army to fight the battle of Milvian Bridge when he purportedly had a vision. He claimed that he saw a flaming cross in the sky, and underneath the cross were the words, "In this sign conquer." Constantine won the battle and said that the sign was an omen that he should become a Christian.

Recognizing that the Christian church would soon become a dominant force, He claimed to have converted and began building up the power and prestige of the church. He even required his entire army to be baptized on the spot! Through his influence, great hordes of pagans were taken into the Christian ranks, but these men and



women were actually still pagan at heart. They brought in their idols and customs of sun worship, and these were appropriated into the practice of the Christian church.

The great historian Sozomen observed, "The people of Constantinople, and almost everywhere, assemble together on the Sabbath, as well as on the first day of the week, which custom is never observed at Rome or at Alexandria" (Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book 7, chap.19).



When Constantine pressed his pagan supporters into the church, they were *already* observing Sunday as a special holy day. In order to make it more convenient for them to be Christians, Constantine accepted their day of worship, Sunday, instead of the Christian Sabbath, which had been observed by Jesus and His

followers up until that time. And again, the way had been made easier by anti-Jewish feelings, causing many Christians to avoid being seen as Jewish sympathizers because "the Jews killed Christ."

It's quite easy to understand how Constantine was able to alter Christian practice to favor Sunday over Saturday. While his subsequent actions suggest his "conversion" was far more political in nature rather than a genuine heart change, Constantine named himself Bishop

The Venerable Day of the Sun

At that time, the cult of Mithraism, or sun worship, was the official religion of the Roman Empire. It had its own temples, priesthood, and robes. It also had an official worship day, which was called "The Venerable Day of the Sun." It was the first day of the week, and from it we get the name Sunday.

A Matter of Official History



"It was Constantine who first made a law for the proper observance of Sunday and who appointed that it should be regularly celebrated throughout the Roman Empire" (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, "Sunday").

"Mithraism recognized Caesar as the bearer of divine grace. It had so much acceptance that it was able to impose on the Christian world its own sun-day in place of the Sabbath" (*History of Christianity in the Light of Modern Knowledge*).



"The Catholic Church for over one thousand years before the existence of a Protestant by virtue of her divine mission, changed the day from Saturday to Sunday" (*The Catholic Mirror*, September 23, 1894).

"Question: Which is the Sabbath day? Answer: Saturday is the Sabbath day. Question: Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday? Answer: We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church in the Council of Laodicea transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday" (*Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine*).



of the Catholic Church and enacted the first civil law regarding Sunday observance in AD 321.

Constantine's Decree

"On the venerable day of the sun let the magistrate and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed. In the country however, persons engaged in agricultural work may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits; because it often happens that another day is not so suitable for grain growing or for vine planting; lest by neglecting the proper moment for such operations the bounty of heaven should be lost" (*Schaff's History of the Christian Church*, vol. III, chap. 75).



Constantine's law did not even mention "Sabbath," but referred to the mandated rest day as "the venerable day of the sun." And its practice was largely based on convenience—farmers, for instance, could choose to ignore resting from work on Sunday if harvesting time fell on Sundays. Contrast this with God's command to observe

the Sabbath "even during the plowing season and harvest" (Exodus 34:21)!

Perhaps later church leaders noticed this laxity, for just four years later, in AD 325, Pope Sylvester officially named Sunday "the Lord's Day," and in AD 338, Eusebius, the court bishop of Constantine, wrote, "All things whatsoever that it was the duty to do on the Sabbath (the seventh day of the week) we (Constantine, Eusebius, and other bishops) have transferred to the Lord's Day (the first day of the week) as more appropriately belonging to it."

In a very real and very dangerous way, these leaders exalted themselves to the place of God—directly changing a law of God to suit their political and economic ends. As a result, for thousands of years, the vast majority of Christians have passed this manmade Sabbath down through the generations to today.

What Does God Say?

Few people today know this fascinating history of the Sabbath—how men attempted to change God's Sabbath law to reflect their own personal and political ends. So you might be wondering, "What does God think about the church leaders who attempted to change the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday?" Well, it isn't particularly pretty.

The Bible says that with God "there is no variation or shadow of turning" (James 1:17), and He does not change (Malachi 3:6). The Israelites received two laws




"There was and is a command to keep holy the Sabbath day, but that Sabbath day was not Sunday. It will however be readily said, and with some show of triumph, that the Sabbath was transferred from the seventh to the first day of the week, with all its duties, privileges and sanctions. ... Where can the record of such a transaction be found: Not in the New Testament. ... There is no scriptural evidence of the change of the Sabbath institution from the seventh to the first day of the week" (Dr. E. T. Hiscox, author of the *Baptist Manual*).

"The Jewish Sabbath faded from the mind of the Christian church, and ... the newer thought underlying the observance of the first day took possession of the church. We have seen that the Christian of the first three centuries never confused one with the other, but for a time celebrated both" (*The Sunday Problem*, a study book by the Lutheran Church, p.36).

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"Sabbath in the Hebrew language signifies rest, and is the seventh day of the week ... and it must be confessed that there is no law in the New Testament concerning the first day" (Methodist Charles Buck, *A Theological Dictionary*, "Sabbath").





from Moses: the law of Moses, that of ordinances and ceremonies; and the Law of God, embodied in the Ten Commandments, which is an expression of God's very character. If God does not change, neither will His Law change. "My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips" (Psalm 89:34). "I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it" (Ecclesiastes 3:14). And, "The works of His hands are [faithful] and justice; all His precepts are sure. They stand fast forever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness" (Psalm 111:7, 8).

God gave His Law to the Israelites at Mt. Sinai. Amid thunder and lightning, a thick cloud covered the mountain, and a trumpet blasted. Smoke billowed up as from a furnace and the whole mountain shook as the trumpet grew louder and louder. Moses led the Israelites out of their camp to meet with God, and every one of them trembled. Then God spoke (Exodus 19:16-19, 20:1). If this Law were to be changed, it would be reasonable to expect God Himself to announce it, and give reasons for its alteration, amid the same amount of profound grandeur and ceremony. Yet there is no indication in Scripture of such an announcement—neither in the Old Testament nor the New Testament.

This is why the Lord says, "Her priests have violated My law and profaned My holy things; they have not distinguished between the holy

Don't Change the Bible

God forbids anyone to change His law. "Every word of God is pure. ... Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar" (Proverbs 30:5, 6). And Deuteronomy 4:2 explains, "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."

and unholy, nor have they made known the difference between the unclean and the clean; and they have hidden their eyes from My Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them" (Ezekiel 22:26). Because of their actions, millions of honest, sincere Christians have been led to believe the Bible teaches something it does not.

This is not something God takes lightly, because the truth is paramount to the Lord. Jesus himself condemned the Pharisees for pretending to love God while making void one of the Ten Commandments by human tradition; He said, "You have made the

commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. ... 'In vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'" (Matthew 15:6, 9).

But we need to be clear; Christians today who have traditionally accepted Sunday as God's special day of worship because that's what they have learned all their lives are blameless before the Lord. God "winks" at our time of confusion (see Acts 17:30). Yet once we learn the truth about His commandments, God desires that we should follow Him and His Son in obedience.

Receive the Sabbath Without Guilt

"For centuries millions of Christians have gathered to worship God on the first day of the week. Graciously He has accepted this worship. He has poured out His blessings upon Christian people as they have sought to serve Him. However, as one searches the Scriptures, he [must] recognize that Sunday is not a day of God's appointment. ... It has no foundation in Scripture, but has arisen entirely as a result of custom" (Frank H. Yost, Ph.D., *The Early Christian Sabbath*).

Don't you see? Learning the true Sabbath day can be like opening a gift from the one you love the most—it's exciting to discover something this profound that's been hidden for so long.





PART 3

The Sabbath **Today** & **Tomorrow**

"If it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve" (Joshua 24:15).

By God's grace, you've learned about the extraordinary moment in time known as the Sabbath. It is a blessed and sanctified day every single week. You've seen how God established it from the very beginning of time and how His people, from Abraham and Moses to Jesus and the apostles, have kept the Sabbath holy.

The big question now, of course, is whether the Sabbath, as a part of the Ten Commandments, is still relevant in our lives today.

Does the Law Still Matter?

It is impossible to fairly consider the Sabbath and its meaning today without addressing the subject of God's law—the Ten Commandments. The Sabbath, the fourth commandment, is an integral part of that package.

God says, "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips" (Psalm 89:34). As we learned earlier, it is impossible for any of God's moral laws to change. The reason is that the Ten Commandments,

spoken by God and written in stone by His own finger, are a reflection of His unchanging character: "For I am the LORD, I do not change" (Malachi 3:6). That's why God has forbidden any person to change His law—by deletions, by additions, or by other modifications. To tamper with His commandments is one of the most dangerous things anyone can do. "Every word of God is pure. ...

Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you" (Proverbs 30:5, 6).

Moreover, Scripture actually shows that all of the Ten Commandments are still binding on people today. Jesus himself upheld the Ten Commandments when He taught His followers, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17).

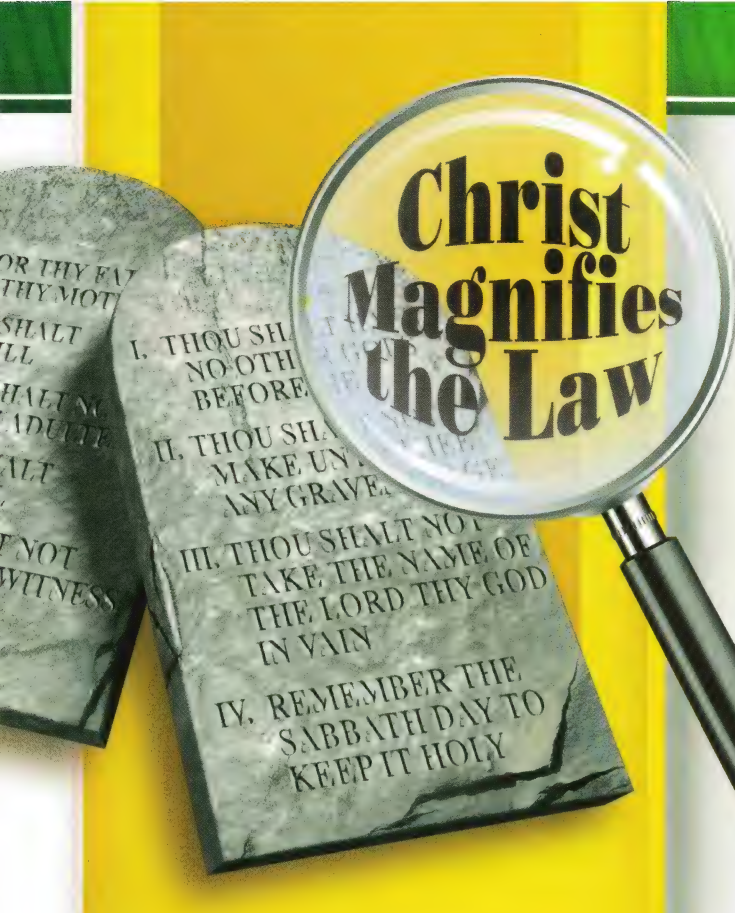
Some believe that the word "fulfill" here really means "to do away with" God's law. But that makes little sense in the context of Jesus' life. Instead, He was asserting that He did not come to abolish the commandments but to keep them *to the fullest*.

Indeed, the life of Jesus was about magnifying God's commandments as our perfect guide for lives of love and joy. For example, Jesus pointed out that "thou shalt

Flight on Sabbath

The Bible shows that Jesus was expecting His followers to be keeping Sabbath after He ascended to heaven, because He told them specifically to pray they would not have to flee for their lives on the Sabbath day during the future destruction of Jerusalem. This flight took place in AD 70. See Matthew 24:20, 21.





Christ Magnifies the Law

The life of Jesus was about *magnifying*, not abolishing, God's commandments as our surefire guide to love, peace, and joy. For example, Jesus pointed out that "thou shalt not kill" also condemns hatred of others and that lust is also a form of adultery. (See 1 John 3:15 and Matthew 5:27, 28.) In this way, He showed us the deeper application of God's law—including His obedience to the Sabbath and its true application for our lives.

not kill" also condemns hatred (1 John 3:15) and that lust in the heart is also adultery (Matthew 5:27, 28). In this way, He showed humanity the deeper application of God's law, including His perfect obedience of the Sabbath, and thus its true meaning for our everyday lives.

Moreover, the New Testament powerfully reaffirms every one of the Ten Commandments. For instance, Jesus reaffirms the first commandment (Exodus 20:3) in Matthew 4:10. And Hebrews 4:4, 9, 10 reaffirms the Sabbath law: "There remains a [Sabbath]."

Jesus also explained, "If you want to enter into life, *keep the commandments*" (Matthew 19:17–19, emphasis added). We know that Jesus was referring to the Ten Commandments here because He was quoting directly from God's law found in Exodus 20. To be sure, Jesus was not suggesting that sinful people could somehow earn their way to heaven by keeping the commandments, but rather that eternal life hinged on our keeping of these commandments. It has been this way since even before the fall of man. The eternal life of Adam and Eve hinged on whether they obeyed God; they lost eternal life when they disobeyed Him. Jesus' life was dedicated to showing us who His Father really is. To obey God's law is to be like Christ.

The Character of God and His Law

As we saw briefly at the start of this chapter, God's law is a perfect reflection of His perfect character, and both the Old and New Testaments bear out this truth.

For instance, in Luke 18:19, God is called "good," while Romans 7:12 calls His law "holy and just and good." In Matthew 5:48, Jesus says God is perfect, and Psalm 19:7 says, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." In Genesis 21:33, Abraham calls "on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God." Again, Psalm 111:8 confirms that His laws "stand fast forever and ever." Perhaps most wonderful is that famous passage explaining that "God is love" (1 John 4:8). Is it any surprise then that "love is the fulfillment of the law"? (Romans 13:10).



Matthew 5:17

Some teach that when Christ said He came to fulfill the law, He really meant to "do away with it." But notice how contradictory that definition makes this statement of Jesus: "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law. ... I did not come to destroy but to *[do away with the law]*." Wouldn't this also mean that Jesus meant to "do away" with righteousness in Matthew 3:15? No. Jesus exalted the law in His life and in His death.

Thus, under no circumstance can God's Ten Commandment law ever be amended or repealed. The words in Scripture that describe God also describe His law. God's commandments are His character in writing. It is no more possible to change God's law than to change God! (Again, see Malachi 3:6.)

Besides, Jesus teaches plainly that "till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled" (Matthew 5:18). His whole life was about keeping and exalting this law; it was His heavenly Father's will for His life. (See John 5:19.) Why would He have endured dying for our sins if His Father could have simply changed His law to deal with sin?

The "New" Law of Christ?

Still, some teach that after Christ's death, the Old Testament law was done away with and a new law of Christ and His grace took its place. But is this really the new covenant? "For this is the [new] covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Hebrews 8:10). Notice it doesn't say, "new laws." Rather, the difference is *where* His laws are now written.

God's commandments are now written in our hearts and minds, and not just on tables of stone.

Yes, it's true that the ceremonial law, "that was against us," (Colossians 2:14) is no longer binding after His crucifixion, but Jesus' sacrifice in no way diminishes the importance of keeping the eternal Ten Commandments. His death actually shows how important they are to God. Indeed, just before His death, Jesus taught His followers, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). Remember here, too, that Jesus and God are one, so God's commands are also Jesus' commands. Could it really be that Jesus was telling His disciples to keep His commandments only until He was crucified, and then they would be of no importance? That just doesn't make sense.

Jesus later added, "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him" (John 14:21). Keeping the law of God is how we show our love to the One who died to give us eternal life!

One of the primary writers of the New Testament, the apostle Paul, strongly supports this view. In his discussion showing how we are justified through faith, Paul asks, "Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not!

*"I will put My laws in their
mind and write them on their
hearts; and I will be
their God, and they
shall be My people"*

Hebrews 8:10



On the contrary, we establish the law" (Romans 3:31). This passage is abundantly clear, isn't it? If we love God, we wouldn't want to go on sinning. If we have accepted His free gift of salvation, we will desire to do what the Savior asks. If not, our faith is not genuine. "For not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified" (Romans 2:13).

The apostle James adds: "He who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does" (James 1:25). It doesn't do any good to know God's law if we don't obey it! Notice again that the commandments are referred to as "the perfect law of liberty." Keeping them through His power gives us liberty by freeing us from the terrible bondage of sin.

Of course, it is *impossible* for humans to keep the commandments without God's help and power, but God has promised to write His law in our hearts when we commit ourselves to Him. "I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

So ... Is the Sabbath Still Relevant?



We have clearly established from Scripture that the Ten Commandments are still valid. However, some think that the Sabbath commandment is somehow a "minor" or "lesser" commandment, the one out of ten that is okay to change or ignore. But Jesus said, in Matthew 5:19, "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

All of God's commandments are important. And please consider the fact that the fourth commandment is the longest, most involved commandment and the only one that starts with the word "remember." Perhaps God knew that people would tend to forget about the Sabbath or decide someday that it was an ancient rule that no longer applied.

It is sobering to consider that, in Old Testament times, Sabbath breaking was actually punishable by death. "Now while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they

Remembering

As the Creation account reveals, "the Sabbath was binding in Eden, and it has been in force ever since. The fourth commandment begins with the word 'remember,' showing that the Sabbath already must have existed when God wrote this law on the tables of stone at Sinai. How can anyone claim that this one commandment has been done away with when they will admit that the other nine are still binding?" —Dwight L. Moody



found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day" (Numbers 15:32). Here was someone who was clearly violating God's commandment; the man was openly rebelling, and it cost him his life (vv. 35, 36). While the Christian faith isn't run like the theocracy of Israel, this incident graphically illustrates the importance God places on the Sabbath commandment.

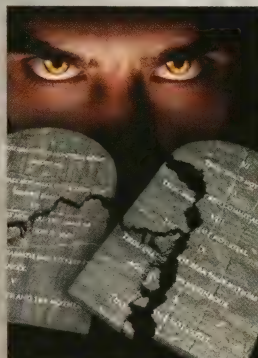
"Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them. Yet the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness; they did not walk in My statutes; they despised My judgments, which, if a man does, he shall live by them; and they greatly defiled My Sabbaths. Then I said I would pour out My fury on them in the wilderness, to consume them" (Ezekiel 20:12, 13).

This passage shows that the Sabbath is a sign of our saving relationship with the Lord, but it also points out that breaking the Sabbath is not an issue God takes lightly. Verses 20 to 24 also show us how intensely the Lord feels about anyone profaning His Sabbath day.

We can't rely on our own judgment and the tide of culture in this matter. Jesus obeyed the Sabbath, even as He freed people from the rules that man, not God, had placed on the Sabbath. Anyone who chooses to follow Christ's example of keeping the Sabbath is in a much safer place than those who choose to reject Christ's example.

Satan and the Sabbath

The devil despises those who keep Sabbath because God's laws are based on His government of love. "The dragon was enraged with the woman ... who keep the commandments of God" (Revelation 12:17). If you choose to follow God's law, you are bound to encounter the devil's anger.



When Moses told Pharaoh of Egypt to release God's people from slavery, the king responded by increasing their workload so they would no longer think about resting and the Promised Land. He said, "Look, ... you make them rest from their labor!" (Exodus 5:5). To keep the Hebrews from thinking about liberty, Pharaoh increased their workload. This is the same tactic Satan uses to keep us from enjoying the

blessings of the Sabbath, keeping us so preoccupied with the worries of life we forget to consider the bigger picture of Jesus and rest. It makes sense that the devil would target the Sabbath—it's a critical building block to our love relationship with God; it also improves our health, revitalizes our spiritual outlook, and honors God as our Creator and Redeemer.

Good Health and the Sabbath

How the Sabbath Benefits Our Physical, Mental, and Spiritual Health

Overwhelming statistics show that stress is a major factor contributing to the rampant disease and unhappiness in our society, and one of the main causes of stress is the rapid pace of our lives. The Sabbath is a perfect respite from this harmful trend.

Think about it: For millennia, humans went to sleep soon after the sun went down. The artificial light of candles and lanterns was expensive and not very effective in the night. But with the invention of the light bulb, we now have virtual sunlight 24 hours a day. As a result, from the moment we rise till we collapse in bed at the end of the day, we rarely stop to take a breather!

More often than not, we live in a frazzled rush and wonder how we'll ever catch up. Even if this weren't the case, we humans have been designed to enjoy a weekly break from our daily work and other secular activities. Humans are preprogrammed by God to thrive in the cycle of Sabbath rest. It's a built-in demand of our minds and bodies. And of all the generations who have lived on this earth, perhaps ours needs this Sabbath rest the most!

Of course, the Sabbath involves spiritual rest, but what are some of the physical benefits from a weekly day of rest?

An Obvious Connection

Not surprisingly, there is a clear connection between weekly rest and improved health.

Seven days make up a week. It sounds like a simple concept, but the truth is that scientists don't really know why the seven-day cycle is so ingrained in our bodies, as well as in society and culture around the world.



Unlike the years, days, and months, the seven-day week is not based on any solar pattern. Yet research has shown that we have an internal, biological seven-day cycle—called the circaseptan rhythm. For example, after an organ transplant, the rejection rate is higher for the transplanted organ on the seventh and fourteenth day following the operation.

The preventive and restorative qualities of a weekly day of rest could actually reduce the risk of heart disease. There are certain risk factors for heart disease that are directly related to mental and physical stress.

One of these risk factors is increased levels of uric acid in the blood, which can be increased after periods of physical exertion. One study found that the concentration of uric acid in the blood was increased for up to 21 hours following intense physical activity.

Another risk factor is an increase in the blood levels of fibrinogen, a compound that facilitates the formation of blood clots. Fibrinogen has been found to be increased due to difficult mental problem solving and periods of mental crisis. Levels of fibrinogen have also been found to naturally peak on a seven-day cycle. In one study of more than 5,000 hospitalized male veterans, fibrinogen levels were found to reach a peak on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday.

Two other factors associated with an increased risk of heart disease are stress and high blood pressure. Stress can be physical and mental in nature, both of which can increase blood pressure.



Weekly Rest = Reduced Risk

But how does a weekly rest day reduce the risk of heart disease? Well, all of these risk factors are related to stressful mental or physical work. Therefore, the risk for developing heart disease can be lowered through stress reduction.

Considering these risk factors, fibrinogen is a fixed variable peaking on the following days: Saturday, Sunday, and Monday. These days would logically be optimal times to rest from physically and mentally challenging tasks. However, if we had to pick one day from the three, which one would provide optimal heart protection?

After a stressful week, uric acid levels take time to decrease. Friday night would be the optimal beginning of our rest—due to the fact that uric acid levels could begin to decrease before the potentially elevated levels of fibrinogen on Saturday. Amazingly, the biblical seventh-day rest actually begins at sundown on Friday, providing this additional time for uric acid levels to decrease!

Note that restricting activity throughout the week will not spare you from the risk of heart disease. Studies show that a sedentary lifestyle, combined with a high calorie diet, leads to chronic inflammation and elevated levels of C-reactive protein, another risk factor. So hard work during the week is actually good for you!

Additionally, resting from labor does not imply that the weekly rest should be spent in complete inactivity. On the contrary, this kind of behavior can increase your risk of vascular complications.

Studies show that people who keep Saturday as their weekly day of rest have dramatic decreases in the rates of coronary artery disease. For example, according to research by *National Geographic*, Seventh-day Adventists outlive their American counterparts by up to 10 years. Among the reasons given is their practice of keeping every Saturday as a Sabbath rest. Studies show that people who keep Saturday as their weekly day of rest have dramatic decreases in the rates of coronary artery disease as well!

Mind Cure

The impact of a weekly rest on mental health has been tested as well. Freeing our minds from the normal cares of life, the Sabbath provides relief from the constant stresses and anxieties that drain our mental powers and leave our minds spinning.

Interestingly, France once attempted to change the weekly cycle to what they thought was a more “logical” decimal-based system, known as the Republican Calendar. New months were invented, and a 10-day week was instituted. However, this attempt at “reason” actually filled up the country’s mental institutions and was quickly abandoned! Apparently our brains, too, have a built-in need for downtime.



Sabbath Recharge

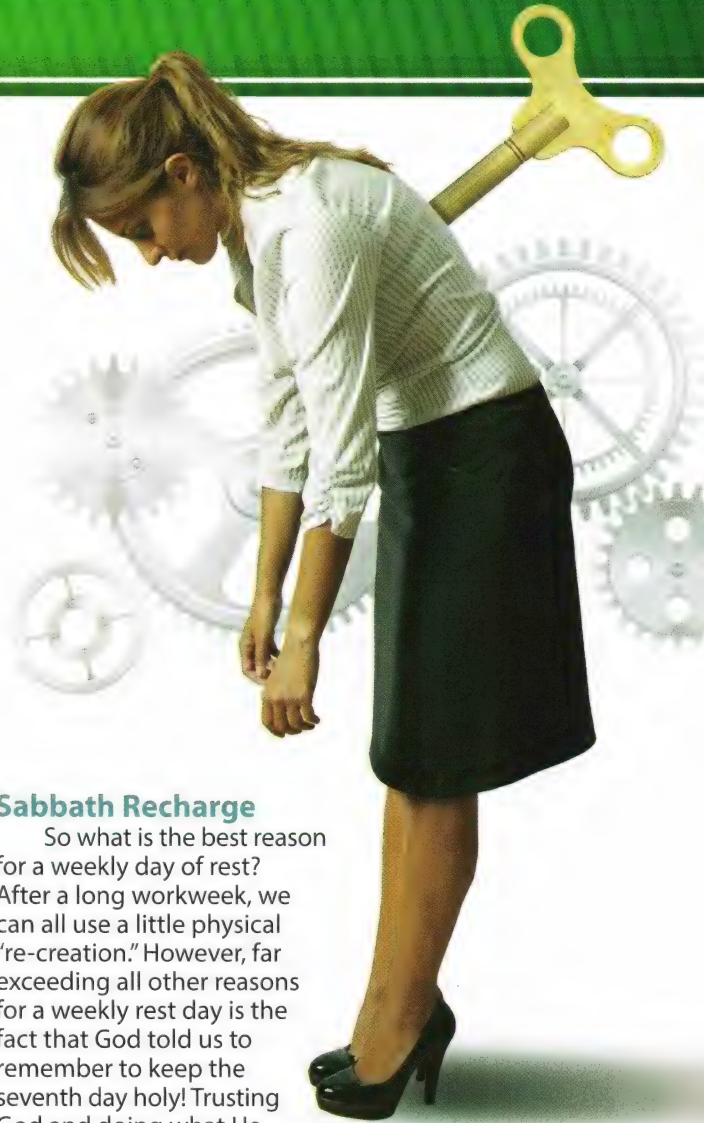
So what is the best reason for a weekly day of rest? After a long workweek, we can all use a little physical “re-creation.” However, far exceeding all other reasons for a weekly rest day is the fact that God told us to remember to keep the seventh day holy! Trusting God and doing what He commands will always result in a blessing.

As we’ve seen, the Bible is full of examples of those who remembered God’s fourth commandment, reaping the benefits of both physical and mental rest: Moses, King David, the apostles, and Jesus Christ—to name just a few!

Before the fall of mankind and the entrance of sin into our world, people had no need for physical recovery from a draining week of labor. Yet God sanctioned the seventh day anyway as a time of special communion with the people of His creation. So the weekly rest, the “Sabbath,” is most important as a blessed day of optimal spiritual recovery.

The Sabbath is a time to break away from our occupations, our worries, and our regular activities. By spending time with family and friends, worshiping together, getting out in nature, sharing our faith, and seeking God—our spirits are revived, our minds renewed, our bodies rested and refreshed. We become infused with hope and energy. Starting out your workweek after that kind of re-creation, you will feel like a new person!

This is God’s special gift to us every week.



Does Keeping the Sabbath Really Affect You?

God's Word says that we're all responsible for our own choices and actions: "So then each of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12). "Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). "Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city" (Revelation 22:14). "Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God" (Revelation 14:12).

Taking a Sabbath rest is also an act of faith; it's a reminder that no matter what we do, God is in control. When we cease from pursuing our material goals for one day each week, we're saying, "God, I trust You to maintain control while I spend this day letting go of my secular life. I trust You to provide for my needs seven days a week, even if I only work for six of them. Regardless of how much money I could earn today, or how much remains on my to-do list from last week, today I'm going to rest my mind and body and simply enjoy being in Your presence."

Yes, by all means, the Sabbath is *your* Sabbath. God made it for *you*, and if you love Him you will keep it because it is one of His commandments. Love without obedience is no love at all (1 John 2:4). You must make a decision. You cannot avoid it. God asks you to love and obey Him today!

How to Keep the Sabbath Holy

So how do you keep the Sabbath holy? Here are some tips to get you started!

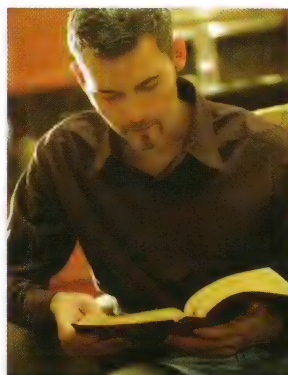
- 1 Go to Church.** One of the greatest features of the Sabbath is that it's a time to come together in worship with friends, family, and even strangers.



In Leviticus 23:3, the Sabbath is called a "holy convocation"—a holy assembly. Except for illness or injury, staying at home on Sabbath robs you of a great blessing you might otherwise receive by worshiping with a church family. And gathering with God's people is not

only for worship; we also need to encourage each other, especially as Christ's return draws near (see Hebrews 10:24, 25).

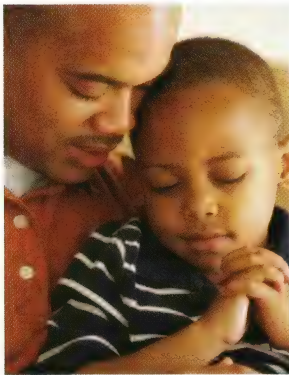
- 2 Study the Word.** On Sabbath, Jesus went to church and read the Scriptures (Luke 4:16). Sabbath,



therefore, is a perfect time to dig in and study the Scriptures at home, at church, or under a tree. Of course, we should read our Bibles daily. But Sabbath gives us an opportunity to learn about God in a more focused way as we study and listen to the Word proclaimed.

3

Pray. While prayer should be an important part of our daily lives, the Sabbath provides time when we can focus on talking with our best friend, Jesus, and



deepen our relationship with Him. And because the Sabbath is a memorial of creation, what a blessing it can be to find a place in nature to worship with family and friends and to pray together. That can make Sabbath even more special! Read Acts 16:13.

4

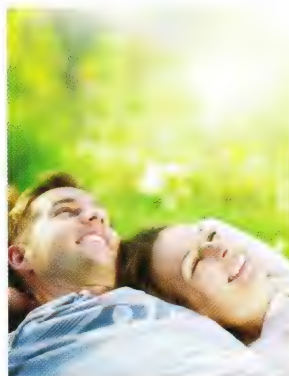
Build the Relationship. The Sabbath was set aside for us to grow in our appreciation and love toward the Lord. You cannot know someone well unless you spend time with that person. The



Sabbath provides uninterrupted quality time with God. The rush of work, of paying bills, of cleaning the garage, and so many other things are set aside so we can nourish our relationship with the Lord, unburdened by the cares of life.

5

Rest. The Israelites' exodus from slavery and entrance into the Promised Land revolved around resting. The devil still does not want God's people to



rest. Just as the captive Israelites in Egypt needed God's rest, so we also need to rest in God's deliverance. Before we reach the heavenly Promised Land, Satan will once more use the powers of this earth to try to stop God's people from worshiping on Sabbath. Such rest can

be physical, mental, and emotional—but we cannot forget that it is spiritual rest as well.

6

Restore. Sabbath is also a day for restoration. As we go out into God's creation, we experience "re-creation." Our bodies are restored by rest. Similarly,



when we visit the sick on the Sabbath, it restores their spirits. Even the Sabbath itself needs to be restored in God's people. The Sabbath is holy time, and we should walk sacredly through the day with God, honoring Him by restoring the Sabbath that so many have trampled on.

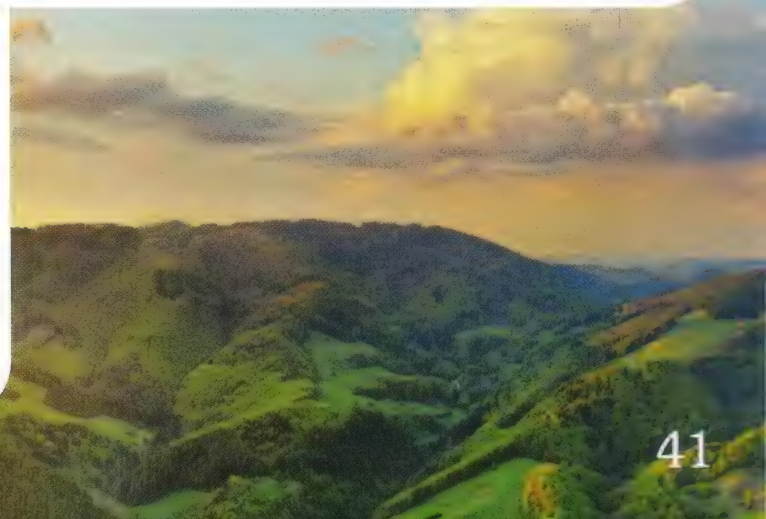
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Do Good. It's possible to become so focused on what not to do on Sabbath that we neglect the good things we can do. When asked by the Pharisees if it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath, Jesus answered them, "What



man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath" (Matthew 12:11, 12). Sheep still fall into pits today—emergencies can arise that call for our attention.

When people suffer on the Sabbath and we're able to help them, shouldn't we have a heart for them, even more than for suffering animals stuck in a ditch? And remember, sharing your faith on the Sabbath can bring another soul into the salvation rest of Jesus.





The Sabbath of the Future

Did you know that those who are redeemed will enjoy the Sabbath throughout eternity? It's true! Just as the Sabbath was observed by Adam and Eve before the fall on a sinless earth, it will be kept in heaven and the new earth. This amazing prophecy is found in Isaiah 66:22, 23—

"For as the new heavens and the new earth
Which I will make shall remain before Me,'
says the LORD,
'So shall your descendants and your name remain.
And it shall come to pass
That from one New Moon to another,
And from one Sabbath to another,
All flesh shall come to worship before Me,'
says the LORD" (emphasis added).

The Bible assures us that the saved people of all ages will keep this special day holy. The Sabbath will continue throughout the eons as a cherished blessing to God's people. If He is calling all flesh to worship on the Sabbath in heaven, we should get in the habit now! So why not begin eternity now by committing to and embracing God's seventh-day Sabbath in your life today?

A Last-day Test

In Daniel chapter 3, three heroic young Jews—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—faced a government law requiring false worship. The Bible records the decree as saying that if anyone failed to bow and pray to the golden image that the Babylonian king set up, they were going to die in a flaming furnace.

How easy it would have been for the three Hebrew slaves to say, "When the music plays and everyone else bows down to the idol, let's all just stoop down to adjust our sandals." They could have found any number of excuses to look innocent and not really worship the king. They could quietly pray to the Lord with all their hearts, if not their bodies. After all, that's what really matters—right? But

Birthdays & Sabbaths

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If God intended for another day to be the new Sabbath, He had to remove the blessing from the seventh day and place it on the day that was to replace it. Why? When God bestows a blessing, it is sure: "You have blessed it, O LORD, and it shall be blessed forever" (1 Chronicles 17:27). "I have received a command to bless; He has blessed, and I cannot reverse it" (Numbers 23:20). Your birthday, a memorial of your birth, can't be changed, though you could celebrate it on a different day. Neither can the Sabbath, a memorial of creation (Exodus 20:11), be changed, though some choose to celebrate it on a different day.

instead they boldly said, "No! We will not even appear like we're compromising our worship of God."

In the same way the three young Hebrew men were tempted to reject God, God's people will be challenged and tested when they determine to keep God's Sabbath. As everyone else bowed to the image in Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego probably heard, "Get down! Are you crazy? *Just this once*. Don't be a fanatic!" Yes, the world probably thought they were fanatics, but God



honored them, because Jesus said he that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.

The issue was about whether to obey the commandments of God or the laws of men. It has been this way from the very beginning. A dispute over true worship was also the issue involved when Cain killed his brother Abel. (See Genesis 4:2-15.) Could it be that the last test before the end of time also revolves around the issue of proper worship?

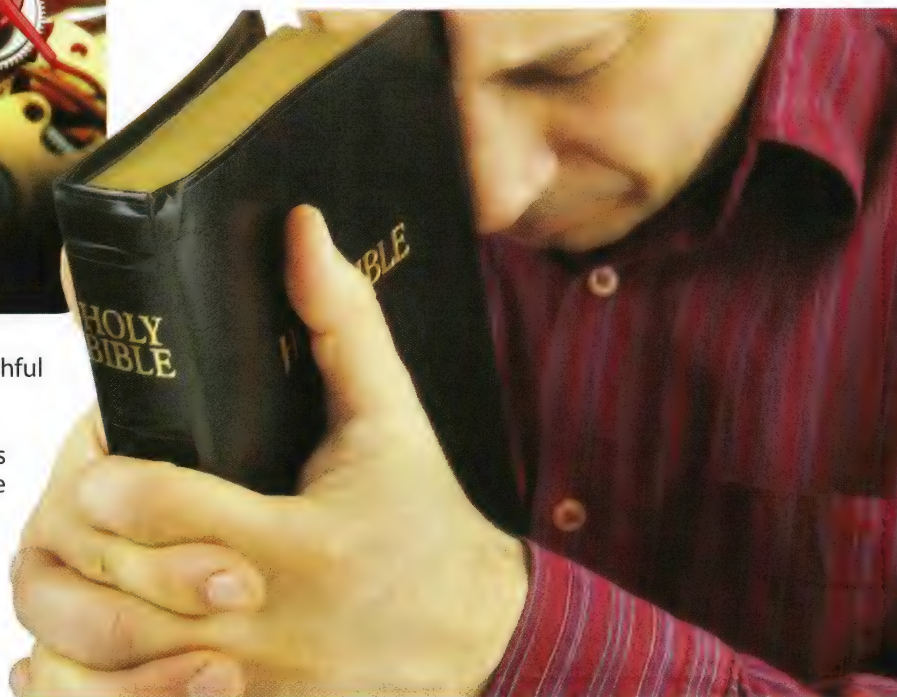
Revelation 13:15 explains that in the future, a law will be enacted by a beast power, who is "granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed." A law is going to be made regarding worship, that if you do not worship the way the beast power dictates, you will not be able to buy or sell, and then, ultimately, it will declare the death penalty.

In Revelation chapter 14, where you'll find the three angels' messages, an angel declares, "Worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water" (v. 7). That's a quote right out of the Sabbath

commandment! "For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea." Then Revelation 14:12 says, speaking of the saved, "Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God." It is contrasting those who keep the commandments of God with those who worship the beast—

"If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation" (vv. 9, 10).

The most fearsome curse in the Bible is found right here in Revelation 14, and it is identifying those who worship the beast. Just a few verses later, on the other hand, it talks about those who keep the commandments of God. And it doesn't mean *some* of the commandments, because everybody keeps some of them some of the time.



It's talking about a people who consistently keep *all* of the commandments, including the Sabbath.

And whether you know something is holy or not, it's still holy. Yes, there are going to be many people in heaven who might have kept the wrong day as the Sabbath; they simply did not know the full truth, and the Lord will judge and bless them according to the light they had available. But they honored what they believed to be His commandments. Now that you know the truth about the Sabbath, will you obey Jesus and keep it holy?

Why the Sabbath?

At its core, the Sabbath is about love, and love is the key to God's kingdom. God loves and accepts us as His own children. The great commandments are all about love for God and love for our fellow humans.

His great love for us caused Him to send His own Son to give His life for our rescue. He wants to spend time with us and share with us the wisdom of His knowledge to enrich our lives. He wants to fill our hearts with His love and light, inspiring us to help others. He wants to help us stay on the path to salvation.

It's impossible to develop and maintain a love relationship with anyone without some kind of time commitment. It's the same with the Lord; if we never spend time with Him, any connection that we might have had will erode and eventually evaporate. We need to spend time with God for our relationship to thrive. Furthermore, the time we spend with our Creator should be quality time. No one deserves our time and careful attention more than the One who made us in His image! After all, if it weren't for God, we would have no time.

"I believe that the Sabbath question today is a vital one for the whole country. It is the burning question of the present time. If you give up the Sabbath, the church goes; if you give up the church, the home goes; and if the home goes, the nation goes. That is the direction in which we are traveling. The church of God is losing its power on account of so many people giving up on the Sabbath and using it to promote selfishness" (*Weighed and Wanting*, Dwight L. Moody).

What to Do on the Sabbath

Still stuck about what you can do on the Sabbath? Here are a few ideas of possible Sabbath activities—besides going to church—that you can enjoy individually or as part of a group:

1. Get outside and enjoy nature—go to a park, the mountains, or enjoy the wonders of creation right in your own backyard. Go for a hike to watch birds and animals or collect rocks, wildflowers, or leaves.
2. Invite a church visitor home for dinner.
3. Listen to inspirational music such as hymns, Scripture songs, or classical pieces.
4. Make music. If you play an instrument or sing, why not "make a joyful noise" to the Lord?
5. Read the Bible. Study out a certain topic that you're interested in by using a concordance. Share what you learn with someone close to you.
6. Write your own psalm of praise to God, then share it with a friend or family member.
7. Write a note of encouragement to a sick or elderly person.
8. Visit the elderly in nursing homes.
9. Visit prisoners. Share books with them and offer to give them Bible studies.
10. Visit friends or church members who are in the hospital and pray with them.
11. Take a notebook and start listing the things you're thankful for. Add to the list during the week and/or on Sabbaths.
12. Hand out books or other literature to your neighbors.
13. For days when the weather restricts activities, play a Bible game, solve a Bible crossword, do a nature puzzle, or read a Christian book.
14. Memorize a Bible passage, then recite it for your family.



The God of the universe has set aside a particular time each week so that we can meet and commune personally with Him. Here is His incredible promise:

"If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath,
From doing your pleasure on My holy day,
And call the Sabbath a delight,
The holy day of the LORD honorable,
And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways,
Nor finding your own pleasure,
Nor speaking your own words,
Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD;
And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth,
And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father.
The mouth of the LORD has spoken"
(Isaiah 58:13, 14).



No Pleasure on the Sabbath?

The word "pleasure" in this passage doesn't mean anything that you enjoy doing is automatically wrong on the Sabbath. In fact, this passage calls Sabbathkeeping "a delight." It is actually speaking of following your own personal business pursuits, your own selfish plans and ways.

God is saying that if we cherish and honor His Sabbath day, He has promised to bless us in a very special way. On this day, we should set our own agendas aside, put the world's distractions aside, so we can sit at the feet of Jesus and learn from Him. This special day was never meant to be a burden. It should never be just a "day of rules" either. Instead, it should delight us because we have this wonderful opportunity to draw closer to the One we love, Jesus.

Do you have heavy burdens that you carry throughout the week? Are you looking for a rest from guilt, fear, or sorrow? Or are you simply looking for something better in life? There is a way of life that offers hope, happiness, and healing: Jesus said, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). One of the ways He accomplishes this is through His Sabbath day, which brings the spiritual, mental, and physical rest we so desperately need. In the beginning, God created the Sabbath and then He blessed and sanctified it. He can do the same with you—recreating and sanctifying your heart and blessing your life.

If you've never spent time considering in practical ways how you can keep the Sabbath holy, why not make a commitment right now? Ask God to help you to honor Him and keep His day holy. He will show you the way. And when you choose to put God first and honor this special appointment in time, you can count on Him making you holy, as He has made the Sabbath holy!

Won't you choose now to accept the rest Jesus is offering you?



If you would like to study more about the Sabbath, please visit www.SabbathTruth.com



INSIDE REPORT

SPECIAL ISSUE

"The Rest of Your Life"

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Aren't we under grace and not the law?

Isn't the Sabbath only for the Jews?

Can't we keep any day of the seven as Sabbath?

Isn't obedience to the Sabbath just a form of legalism?

Isn't the Sabbath just a shadow that passed away at the cross (Colossians 2:14)?

Shouldn't we keep Sunday in honor of Jesus' resurrection?

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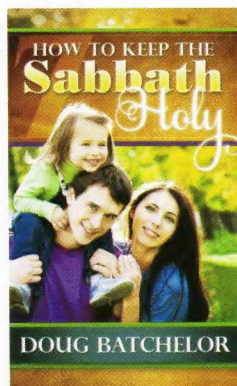
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You've learned God created the Sabbath because He loves you. But what about the rest of God's law? Does it still play a part in our lives today? This wonderful video series will help you find the Bible answers.

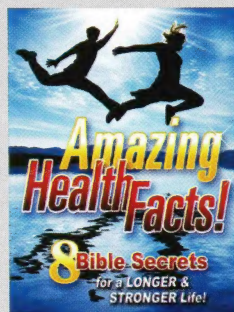


How to Keep the Sabbath Holy

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What does it mean to keep the Sabbath holy? How should we prepare for it in our homes and live it fully in our hearts? Get deeper and more practical answers by starting here!

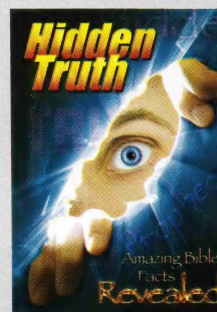
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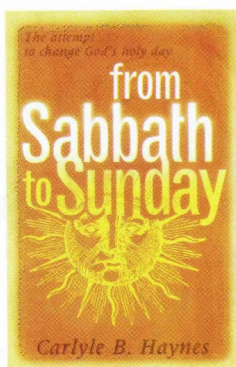
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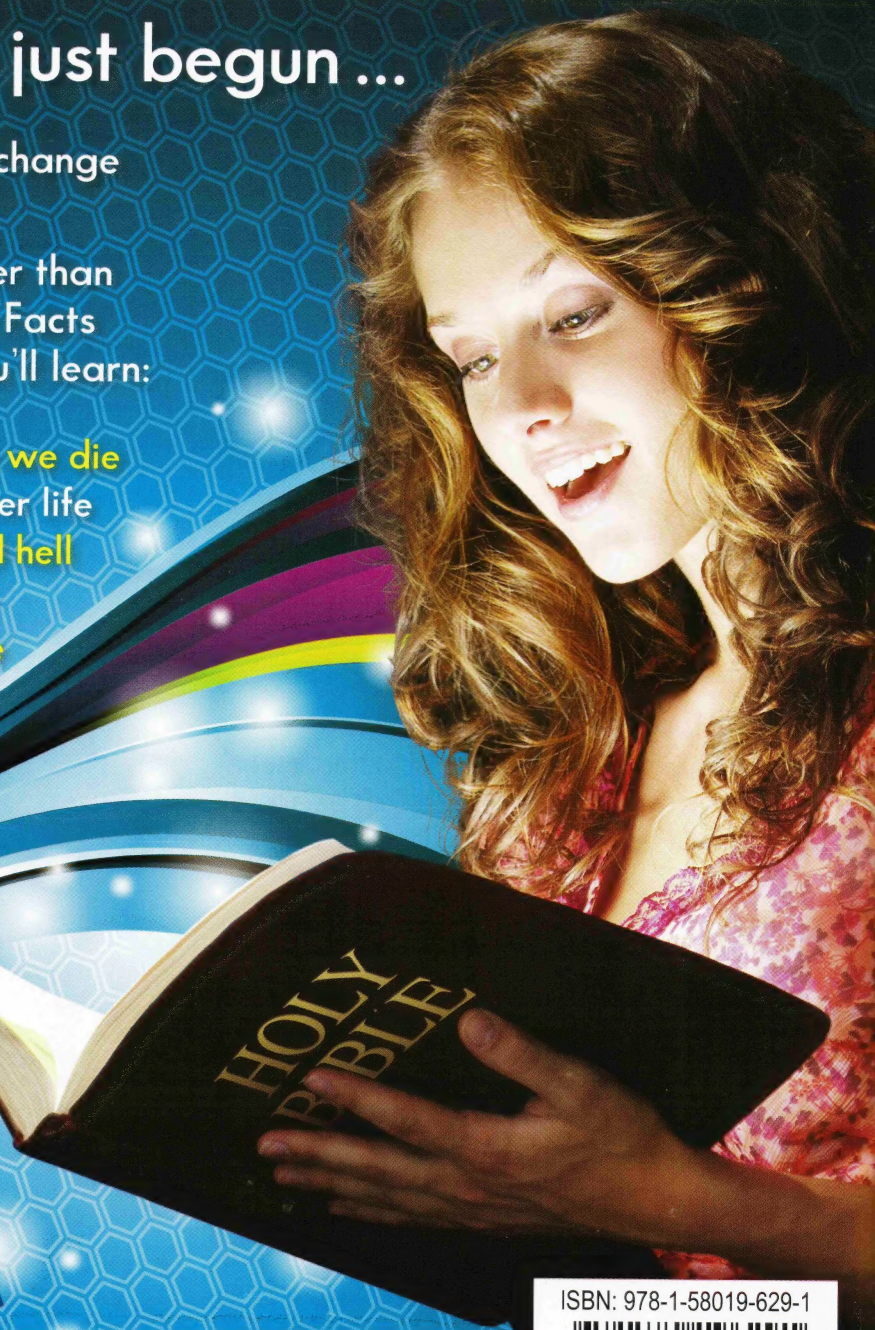
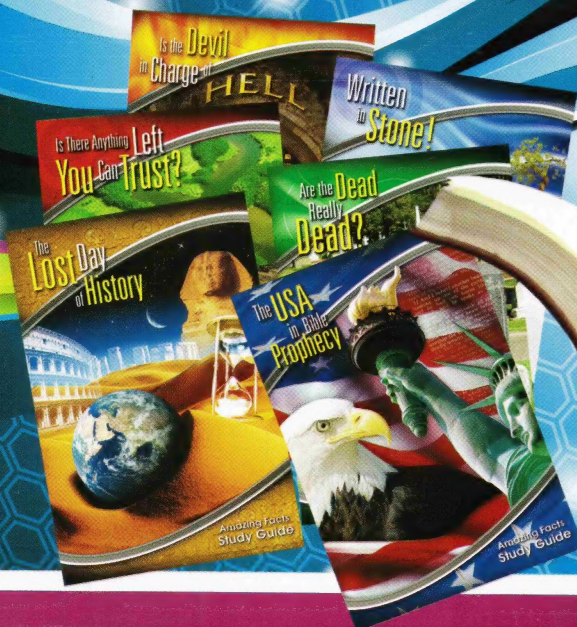
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